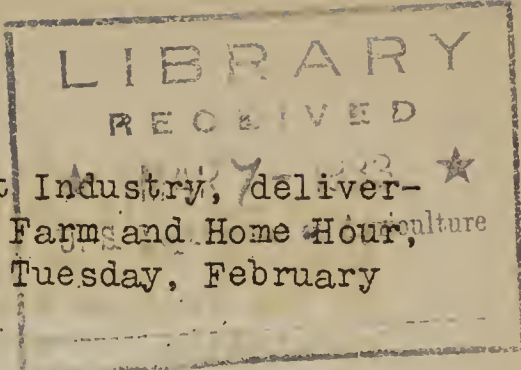


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p. 9 Ra

THE GARDEN CALENDAR



A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, February 14, 1933.

Hello Folks: You doubtless remember what Mr. Wheeler said last Tuesday about the splendid quality of the bluegrass, redtop and other lawnseeds now being offered by the dealers, also that the wholesale prices of these seeds are far below the ten-year average. One of my neighbors, whose home State is located in the bluegrass section, remarked that he didn't see why we were talking about the difficulties of getting a good lawn, all you have to do is to rake the ground nice and smooth and scatter a little bluegrass seed over it. That's true for the natural bluegrass section, but some of us who live outside of the natural bluegrass section certainly do have our troubles getting good stands of grass on our lawns and in our pastures.

While it's still midwinter for some of you, it's spring in the southern part of the country, so I want to add a little to what we said about lawns last Tuesday. It takes more than the mere leveling of the soil and scattering a little seed over it to produce a good lawn under most conditions. The workers in our Forage Crop Division tell me that it's extremely important to have the soil well prepared and fertilized to a depth of 7 or 8 inches and that it takes good soil and feeding to maintain a lawn.

One morning last week I noticed three or four men at work putting down sod on the ground around a new building. On previous mornings I observed these men grading around that building and also that the ground consisted mainly of lumps of clay with a mixture of rocks and pieces of broken concrete and bricks. Not an indication that any manure or fertilizer was being used. The sod was about an inch and one-half thick and looked like fairly good bluegrass sod, and I suppose the owners of that building pride themselves on having done a pretty good job of lawn making. Unless I miss my guess most of that sod will be dead of starvation by next fall.

Some of you folks have soils about your homes that are rich and grow good grass naturally, but many of you are not so lucky, and if you want a nice lawn you must apply fertilizers. Where obtainable, well composted manure should be used as the basis of your soil improvement. Some people object to the use of manure because it frequently contains weed seeds, but if you get a good, close stand of grass you'll have very little trouble with weeds. It's a good idea to supplement the manure with about 5 pounds of bone meal to each 100 square feet of lawn, or with a mixture of equal parts of bone meal and cottonseed meal, but work the fertilizer into the soil to a depth of 7 or 8 inches.

Remember that bluegrass is a little slow getting established and that seed sown this spring will not make a close lawn before next fall, and seed sown in the fall will take nearly a year to get well established. That's why we add redtop and white clover to bluegrass in making our lawnseed mixtures because they give us almost immediate results and then later the bluegrass crowds everything else out.

(over)

If you plan to use a large quantity of lawn seed, and desire to mix your own, I'd advise you to consult your county agent, because the kind and quantity of lawn grass seed to use varies materially for the different sections. In the regions where bluegrass does well, you'll be safe in using a mixture consisting, by weight, of 17 parts bluegrass, two parts redtop, and one part of white clover.

Outside of the natural bluegrass region, but where bluegrass is largely used as a lawnseed, you might use a mixture consisting of 10 parts by weight of bluegrass, 5 parts redtop, 2 parts Chewings fescue, 2 parts Colonia bent grass, and 1 part white clover.

In the New England States where the soils are often quite acid the various bent grasses are used for lawns.

In the South Bermuda grass is one of the most important lawn grasses, while in Florida and in the Coastal Plains section, Carpet grass, Centipede grass, and St. Augustine grass, are largely used. Bermuda grass is very frequently started by sowing the seed, or it can be established by the use of clumps of the roots set about 2 feet apart in each direction. Seed of the Centipede grass is not commercially available, and it must be started by transplanting the clumps of grass. This is also true of St. Augustine grass.

While the best authorities recommend planting bluegrass lawns in the late summer or early fall in most sections, I believe that with our present soil moisture conditions, it will pay to seed lawns this spring, then if the grass burns out during the summer, you can reseed in August or September. Those of you who have a water supply can undoubtedly carry the young grass plants through the summer in good condition.

I'd like to suggest that if you have a garden club, or any kind of home-improvement club in your neighborhood, that you start a lawn contest with a few prizes for those who have the best lawns; the judging to be done at two or three periods during the season. With the present price and quality of lawn-grass seed, the season of 1933 should be a good time for contests of this character. It may seem a little early in the North to be advocating work on lawns, but by the time we get our plans made the season will be so far advanced that actual work may be started.